

The Art of Business Getting

By the Experts
of
The Business Man's Magazine
and The Book-Keeper



PUBLISHED BY
The Book-Keeper Publishing Co., Ltd.
DETROIT, MICH., U. S. A.

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The Art of Business Getting

An Essay on the Elements of Successful Selling

BUSINESS consists of the operations of buying and selling. Sometimes the article or articles purchased are sold in just the same form as that in which they are received. Sometimes the form is changed by manufacture. Sometimes possession is gained by payment of money, sometimes by barter, and sometimes by personal effort. In any case, it is a purchase just the same.

To succeed in business, we must make a profit; that is, we must get for our wares more than we paid for them. Very often one in business must choose between a large volume of business at a small margin of profit, and a small volume of business at a large margin of profit. Circumstances surrounding each individual case must determine the decision in regard to your course in this connection.

The art of getting business may be easily divided into two parts—business getting as the first part, and keeping it as the second. It will be conceded that it ought—all things else being equal—to be easier to sell goods to an old customer than to one who has had no dealings with you or your concern. When you strike a case where it is not easier, you may confidently look for the reason in the fact that the seller did not know how to keep his trade when he had it.

Getting Business.

Success in business demands these four things first as requisites:

- A good buyer.
- A good market.
- A good article to sell.
- A good salesman (or saleswoman).

No matter whether the business be a large or small one; no matter where its location; no matter what the nature of the merchandise dealt in, these four points are of the utmost importance.

A Good Buyer.

An adage, so old as to command respect for its age at least, tells us that "goods well bought are half sold." Perhaps this is a little overdrawn, but it holds, nevertheless, a great deal of truth. Competition is with us and must be reckoned with. We hear much of the monopoly. Few of us have any knowledge of a real monopoly. When a seeming monopoly exists it will usually be found that it does exist simply because the so-called monopolist has placed himself in a position to furnish more or better goods, in a certain line, for a given amount of money than others in the same line. Usually he does this through superior facilities gained by superior foresight. There are "just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught," and just as great are the opportunities of today as those of yesterday or yester-year.

Competition is still with us. An old warrior once said that superior generalship consisted of "gittin' thar fustest with the mostest men." The same thing is true in business. You must get there first. The first strawberries on the market bring fancy prices. The novelties of this

year sell at a profit of 50 per cent. Next year they are staples at a profit of five per cent. Next year or next month (or perhaps tomorrow) they are "back numbers" at a profit of "minus one hundred," more or less. Who wants Christmas trees on the Fourth of July? Here is where the good buyer comes in. The good buyer may be a man or woman, but in either case the qualities are the same. We'll call the buyer "he" for the sake of convenience. (Why don't someone invent a personal pronoun which can be used in cases like this. We can't call our buyer "it.")

The good buyer gets there first with seasonable goods, just on time (too early is as bad as too late). When our competitor gets new goods which take our trade away from us, who is to blame? The buyer. Who's to blame when the season ends and finds us with an over-supply? The buyer. It is hard to say who is the most important man in the business, but when the final analysis of the most important position is made the buyer will be "there or thereabouts," as the sailors say. Now, don't make a mistake. Don't say that your business is too small to have these facts apply. Don't say that they do not apply just because you are buyer and salesman, too. They do apply just the same. The good buyer will have an intelligent appreciation of the possibilities of every article he purchases. If he does not he is not a good buyer.

You can probably find many a grocer who cannot tell you whether the figs he sells you come from Italy or Turkey—and you can bet he's not much of a success, either. He never got anywhere first. Where your goods come from; when they first come on the market; when the best time is to buy, are important points which the

good buyer appreciates and does not overlook. The good buyer always has time to listen to a man who has something to sell. If the salesman has more knowledge of the goods than the good buyer has, the buyer has a chance to learn something. A chance to learn something should not be lightly passed by. Surplus information is a valuable asset and is easy to carry around. It costs nothing for storage or insurance and is easily turned into money.

The good buyer cannot know it all—he won't try. This being the case, he will frequently be compelled to buy something which he knows nothing about. His best plan in a case of this kind is to simply confess ignorance. Let him go to some source of supply in which he has confidence and simply say: "I want so much—don't know anything about ruling values, but I want it at the right price."

It's ten chances to one that he'll get it at the right price. If he don't he'll find it out later. Then it's time to have an accounting with the one who sold it—and incidentally sold him at the same time. It don't pay for the seller to take advantage in this way, and as a consequence he seldom does. It pays to be smart, but it never pays to be too smart.

The good buyer will make mistakes—everybody does. When he makes a mistake and buys the wrong goods let him "own up"—to the management if he is responsible to a manager or to himself if he is "his own boss." Next let him make arrangements to dispose of the unseasonable, otherwise slow selling article at once. Once in a while it may pay to hang on in hopes that circumstances will change, but usually it will not pay. If "goods well

bought are half sold," then goods badly bought are better sold at once—and at almost any price.

A Good Market.

In some lines of business you must go where your market is. In others you must bring your market to you. All we need to know is that sales are possible to a sufficient amount to make the business profitable. That point settled, it is "up to" the salesman or sales manager to make the sales. One thing should be settled at once: Is our location the correct one or not? If not, the sooner we change it, the better. Many a failure has been changed to success by a judicious change of location at just the right time.

A Good Article to Sell.

Being in business, you must performe sell the line of goods commonly sold in that line of trade. To sell a good article does not necessarily mean that you must sell the best or highest priced article in any given line. On the contrary, it may mean the cheapest. You would not do much business trying to sell diamonds or automobiles to a community of day laborers. A "good article" means just what your trade wants at a price which they are able and willing to pay. Do not make the mistake of supposing that people in moderate circumstances will not pay a fair price for a good article. They will. Sometimes you must educate them into the idea that they want the good article and can afford it, but it will pay you to play the part of educator in this direction if you are successful. That part of the business lies with the salesman.

A Good Salesman.

All the foregoing is but a prelude to the real art of getting business, but a very necessary prelude, nevertheless.

Selling goods is simply the art of finding out what your customer wants and then supplying the want. Some people have the art or knack of finding out what is wanted before the customer finds it out himself—such people are always successful. Of course it won't do to force your goods upon a customer. Even if you can succeed in making a sale you won't make a customer—and we cannot consider any sale a success which does not make it easier to sell the same thing a second time, or at least, to sell to the same customer another time.

Selling goods must necessarily be done in one of two ways—either by personal contact or through correspondence. These two plans have many variations. Selling goods by personal contact runs all the way from the "pack peddler" to the big jobbing house with its scores and perhaps hundreds of salesmen. The proposition is much the same in either case. We will leave out of consideration the staple trade so far as regular lines are concerned. When the article sold is so commonly used that the buyer can take his choice of a score of possible sources of supply, it becomes simply a question of price. When the price is uniform in all available markets—and it very frequently is nowadays—friendship often determines where the order shall go. Perhaps it would be nearer right to say "usually." We used to hear it said that "there is no friendship in business." That is a plain, unvarnished lie—and a very silly one. Any old salesman will deny it and can refute it in a minute. For the sake of convenience we will consider the various factors in selling, separately.

The House.

We will admit to begin with that we are not here "for

our health." We are in trade for what we can get out of it. Of course, we are respectable and reputable. We would not hit a man over the head and take his money away from him before he woke up, even if we could. We want to make money, however, and it simply comes to a question of selling as much as we can at the best price we can get. Competition will very largely dictate our prices. To put up our price will cut down our sales, so we must be content to get a very limited margin of profit—unless we can get up a "combination." When we can "get together" with our competitors and agree upon a minimum price, we usually put that price at the point once described by a railroad official as "all the traffic will stand." Having done this, and being sure that no one can sell at a figure below our own, it behooves us to show the buyer other reasons for trading with us than the price question. As a matter of fact, we must do this anyway.

A good many people are willing to pay a trifle more for the sake of buying goods where they like to buy. The unpopular house must offer special inducements—must sell goods a great deal cheaper than the popular one. The first precept will always be—"treat your customer right." Of course he is unreasonable—he pays for the privilege. Many a time he will write you a tart, "sassy" letter which will make you yearn to get back at him and tell him just what sort of an animal you think he is. Don't do it. It won't do any good. Write the letter, if you must. It will relieve your feelings. Don't mail it at once. Leave it over until next day—and then tear it up. If his complaint is just, own up and make what reparation you can. Very likely it is unjust. In this case you can very prob-

ably write him a nice letter which will make him ashamed of himself. Quite often he will tell you so. Always be conciliatory, but never be servile. You might better lose him as a customer than to let him get the idea that he has only to make a claim to get it allowed. He would become such a nuisance that he would bother you and your salesmen beyond endurance. Besides this, such a customer demoralizes both your trade and your salesmen.

Prompt filling of orders goes a long way toward making and keeping friends. When you cannot fill your orders promptly you should tell the truth about it. It is utterly useless to lie. What good do you expect to accomplish by telling your customer that you will have a certain line on the first when you know very well that you cannot possibly have the goods until the fifteenth? It simply makes it necessary to lie once more the next time your customer writes you about it.

When a shipment is to be delayed, always write or tell your customer about it. Get in your explanation first. It comes with much better grace than to wait until the customer kicks. If you promised a shipment on the first, and could not ship until the fifth, you should have sent a prompt advice just as soon as you found that you were not going to be able to keep your word.

Of course, you expected to do as you promised. Of course, you thought the goods would be along "tomorrow." Presently the customer writes in asking about the shipment. You or your correspondent writes a very nice letter expressing much surprise that the goods were not received. "Didn't you get 'em? We'll see about it right away." When you do this you are putting down a lying foundation for a structure of lies. Sooner or later you'll

get caught. That will be very embarrassing. Worse than the embarrassment will be the consequent loss of trade. When your customer once "catches you at it" you can never again get his entire confidence.

All this applies just the same, no matter what line of trade you are in or how large your establishment. The jobber should use the same rules of conduct in handling his trade as the man who keeps a little corner grocery.

When your customer gives you an order and wants absolutely impossible conditions as to delivery, it is a great deal better to lose that particular order by frankly admitting that you cannot meet the conditions than to make promises. When you "fall down" (as you surely will) the chances are that you lose the customer altogether. It is a great deal of trouble to train your clerks to be entirely truthful, but it can be done. Don't let anyone tell you that it is impossible, for that is not true. To use your customer right first, last and all the time is one of the secrets of a permanent and abiding success. Tell your clerks that a "square deal" goes, and let them see that it is so and that you mean it by giving them a taste of square dealing. This does not mean that you must raise their wages every fifteen minutes, or, as "Josiah Bounderby" was wont to say: "Feed them turtle soup and venison out of a gold spoon." It simply means a little consideration on your part for their unquestioned rights. Do it, and you will gain an asset of real value. You will be surprised at the increase in value in a really satisfied and contented set of employes, be it two or two thousand.

Advertising.

To sell goods you must let possible purchasers know

that you have the goods for sale. Any way of letting this fact gain publicity is advertising. What they are pleased to call the "ethics of the profession" prevents the doctor and the lawyer from purchasing advertising outright—but they advertise just the same. Church membership—lodge membership—society—politics—philanthropy. All these are used to great advantage. The news columns of the local press are not overlooked. All these are more or less legitimate. Shall we let the "children of Belial be wiser than the children of Light"? Any way you can think of to get your name, your business and your wares before a possible or prospective purchaser is worth your careful consideration.

Any form of advertising costs money, so a careful consideration of ways and means is very necessary. It is not a question of actual cost—it is a question of actual returns. What will it get in the way of increased business and increased profit? That is the real question. What will it cost? is a secondary question. Five dollars spent in a form of advertising which does not bring returns is five dollars thrown away. Five hundred dollars spent in such a way that it will bring back five hundred dollars in additional profit is five hundred dollars well invested. All advertising has an actual value in excess of the real immediate returns in dollars and cents. Just how much this is worth is the question for you to consider seriously. The most humble enterprise must advertise in some way. The sign,

.....
: THIS HOUS :
: FORE SAIL. :
.....

is advertising—of a sort. What might be termed the

"stone age" of advertising is illustrated in the cut, which, by the way, was "taken from life":

The "Stone Age" of Advertising.

Advertising usually means printed matter in some form. Do not make the mistake of investing your good money in poor or cheap appearing printed matter of any sort. Your printed matter represents you. Let it be a fitting representative. The poorest economy you can practice will be to save a few dollars on your printed matter by letting a cheap printer put it upon cheap paper. If it is a possible thing, you should get the advice of someone who really understands advertising. Pay for the advice. It will be well worth the outlay in increased results.

The Salesman.

Dr. Orison Swett Marden in a recent issue of *Success* says: "There will be no chance this year for:

The idler,
The leaner,
The coward,
The wobbler,
The ignorant,
The indifferent,
The unprepared,
The impractical theorist,
The slipshod and the careless,
The one who watches the clock,
The one who is afraid of obstacles,
The one who has no iron in his blood,
The one who is always running to catch up,
The one who wants to pick all the flowers and avoid the thorns.

Here is a good series of maxims for the salesman. He is a hard worked man. The more successful he is the harder worked he is. Hard work brings success, and success breeds hard work. The salesman represents someone—himself or another. Let him be an adequate representative. Good appearance counts for much. This must not mean that the man must try to rival “Solomon in all his glory.” Slovenliness is very bad. Extremes of style are worse. Let him consider his customers and dress in a fitting manner at all times. A silk hat and a gold-headed cane would not go far to gain and keep the confidence and respect of customers to whom he expects to sell stock food or farm fencing. Neatness is imperative at all times, but the one absolutely indispensable factor is work—hard work—constant work—and then more work. Hard work will compensate for many other lacks. No other qualification can permanently take its place. There is a certain sort of man who is slangily described as “Johnny-on-the-Spot.” He is the one who gets the plums. He is the one who gets the cream and leaves the “skim milk” for the other fellow. The hard worker is not necessarily a plodder. In fact, he usually is not, but it does not take him two days to do a day’s work.

The man “on the road” and the one “inside” are subject to just the same conditions. How many salesmen and saleswomen have you seen who took more time in making up their minds to do something than in doing the thing itself? This means wasted time—“lost motion” mechanics call it. Don’t waste your time. Put it where it will do some good. When it is time to work—work. When play-time comes it is time enough to play, but don’t try to mix them. They won’t mix. A very muddy result is produced when the experiment is tried.

When you have a thing to do, do it at once. Don't put it off. If possible, do the hardest and most disagreeable thing first. It comes easier that way. If you succeed in your hardest proposition you can look forward to an easier one next time. If you fail—and failure will come once in a while—you can console yourself with the hope of success in the next trial because it is easier.

In any event, always do the most important thing first. If anything must be neglected, let it be the comparatively unimportant—but try to manage so that nothing will be neglected.

Enthusiasm is another very valuable asset. Enthusiasm comes from a thorough belief in yourself and your proposition—whatever it may be. Enthusiasm is more contagious than smallpox. To inspire your customer with your own confidence in your proposition is half the battle. If you do not believe in your own proposition get out of it. Get another. To try to sell something you do not believe in is to be nothing more or less than a confidence man. Imagine yourself trying to sell life insurance while your honest belief is that the world would come to an end within six weeks. You could not make a sale. I met a man not long ago who had a device which he was selling which looked to me like a "winner." I asked him why he did not get out and sell it in large quantities. "Why," said he, "Smith makes a machine which does the same work which he sells for five dollars, while I ask ten." "Why don't you sell for five?" I asked. "Because," said he, "I cannot make it for less than five, and his is just as good as mine, I guess. What would you do?" "Get out of business," said I. "You have neither reason nor excuse for asking anyone to buy of you. If you do,

under these circumstances, your efforts are simply to obtain charity. It is a case of 'please buy—I need the money.' You are not reduced to asking charity, I take it." He quit—sold his good will to the other fellow, and is now successful on another proposition.

When you ask a customer to buy your goods you must have in your own mind a reason or a series of reasons why your goods should be bought instead of others. Tell your reasons. Tell them logically and clearly. When you have completed your argument, stop. Many a sale has been spoiled by a little inopportune talk after the argument was really completed. Just when to stop is one of the things you must learn—usually from experience. You must know, and know thoroughly, all the weak spots in your own proposition, for of course it will have some weak spots. Nothing is perfect. Know these weak spots thoroughly, but keep them to yourself. Never suggest them simply for the purpose of arguing them away. Your customer will be very likely to point them out. When he does, it will be time enough to argue them away or to point out advantages which more than offset them.

When your customer simply will not buy, you can usually get a reason. Ask him for it. Very possibly you can combat it. Even if you cannot do so, you will at least have the satisfaction of knowing why you could not make a sale, and perhaps it will help you make a sale elsewhere at some other time, to know his reasons.

Always remember that you cannot always make a sale. You cannot do all the business there is to be done. If you could, there would be none left for anyone else. Do not let discouragement creep in. If you cannot succeed

this time make up your mind that you will at the next trial, and then simply keep on trying. When you cannot do this you are about ready to get out of business altogether.

One thing more. Never lose sight of the fact that you are working for the man who pays you your salary. It is easy to fall into the error of looking at things from the customer's viewpoint, but you must not do it. A man "on the road," or a man or woman behind the counter, is naturally the buffer between the "house" and the customer. Make right all which is not right, but do not assume that the "house" is always wrong. Above all, don't "wash your dirty linen" in public. Do all your talking against the house while you are in conversation with the management. Outside let it be, "My country—right or wrong."

Selling by Mail.

Selling goods by mail consists of getting the name and address of possible purchasers and then talking to them on paper instead of in person. Names and addresses are easily gotten. The directory is full of them. The question is to get the names of people who are, or at least who should be, interested in your article. That is a more difficult matter. Advertising in newspapers and magazines is the logical way to do this. Circulars have been "worked to death." A lot of circulars sent out to a miscellaneous list of names will be found to produce very meager results. The average person with money to spend throws unsolicited circulars in the stove or the waste basket. This is not guess-work or theory, but hard-bought experience. If you do not think it is so, try it for yourself. You will find that it *is* so unless you can get

a list of names of people who are directly interested. If you can do this you may be able to approach them in such a way as to gain their attention; but even then it is hard. Most people resent having a thing forced upon their notice.

Magazine and newspaper advertising do not seem to force themselves upon the possible purchaser. When a man or woman answers an advertisement he or she does so of their own free will, and thus imply at least a possible interest in the article advertised. A response to your advertisement gives you a chance to assume the personal tone, and too much stress cannot be laid upon this same matter of the personal element. Advertising space costs money—much money. As a consequence, great care must be taken not to waste it. As stated before, competent advice should be secured as to the best way in which to advertise. A common error in advertising and advertising literature is the one spoken of above—too much talk. In an advertisement you may be compelled to take a large space in order to attract attention. For this purpose it is sometimes wise to take much more space than you can profitably fill with "talk." To be of use an "ad" must be read. Put too much in it and no one will read it. It thus defeats its own purpose. Your "ad" must tell your story to the public. Tell it, then, as clearly, pointedly and concisely as possible. It must be attractive and catchy—that goes without saying. When your story is told, stop. Do not fall into the error of adding more words just because you have room to crowd them into. It is a fatal mistake.

Having secured your possible purchaser, your task is just the same as that of making a sale under any ordi-

nary condition—only you must put your arguments on paper. Present your arguments fully and clearly, but always be as brief as possible. Your personality might hold your possible purchaser if you were face to face, but no such advantage is yours when selling by mail.

A good way to construct your letter is to set down on paper all you would say in a personal interview. Then "boil it down" to the length of a letter. Facts which apply to every case may well be embodied in a circular or booklet and special points or paragraphs may be referred to in your letters. For instance: We will suppose that your product is a washing machine. That will do for an illustration as well as anything else.

Your circular or booklet will tell all about the device. It should leave little to be said as a matter of fact. The trouble will be that the reader will skip through it casually as a general thing. No particular force will be felt. Your letter must supply the emphasis. In your letter you can refer briefly to the various points of advantage and superiority, making the references terse enough to be read carefully and interesting enough to insure a reference to the special paragraphs or pages mentioned.

By following this plan you can write your letters in a sort of series, and thus get more than one chance to argue with your possible purchaser. In writing letters of this sort your own enthusiasm and conviction will be just as great a factor in success as in a face-to-face argument.

Remember what has been said about your printed matter. Issue good printed matter or none at all. Remember that all your possible purchaser will know of you is to be gathered from an inspection of your printed matter

and letters. Let the impression be a good one. It may very well mean the difference between a sale and no sale. You cannot afford to run the risk.

Some of the things said here you have undoubtedly heard before. We do not intend to lay claim to any sort of a monopoly of ideas, or even to claim that these were all evolved from our inner consciousness. They are simply a few deductions drawn from experience—nothing more.

The Argumentative Clerk.

There is no man that I cordially dislike more than the argumentative clerk, he who always knows better than you what you want, who understands merchandise much better than you and insists on reminding you of that fact.

I watched one the other day. "My dear man," he was saying to a customer that did not think a pair of gloves fitted him; "I know more about gloves than you do."

One of the largest shoe concerns in this country is hurting its own trade considerably by the policy of always selling a pair of shoes whether they fit or not, whether they are the style wanted or something very different. Their clerks are instructed from headquarters to make a sale at all costs, to persuade and argue with customers until they get the cash. They dissatisfy a great many that they succeed in selling to, and offend a great many who refuse to be deceived.

The clerk and the customer do not stand on equal terms. The clerk is in his place to please the customer, to serve him properly and to have respect for his views and even his whims—to make purchasing a distinct pleasure rather than a disagreeable task.

The Windy Humbug of the Sales Force.

The following taken from an exchange is so true of a type of salesman with whom many houses are inflicted, and by whom many managers are fooled, that it deserves careful reading by managers everywhere.

"The windy, half-truth teller is another disreputable member of his profession. The probability is that he really thinks himself a wonderful salesman, most likely refers to himself as a cracker-jack, a world-beater, with years of experience, and he does put up a bold front and he makes a good appearance. To hear and believe his talk one would think he was the most wonderful sales-artist who ever came up the pike: he is full of his past great achievements and performances. But if you analyze him and his deeds you discover under the guise of an expert, a rank four-flusher. He has always, according to his own story, never received less than \$5,000 a year and every concern between both oceans wants him now—he is receiving the most flattering offers by every mail, and it is the most difficult task in the world for him to avoid taking a situation at \$8,000 or \$10,000 with unlimited expense accounts thrown in.

"The subscription book selling field offers the best opportunity for this class, and they cast much undeserved discredit upon the gentlemen in that line, who to be permanently successful, must have sterling character in their make-ups. Mr. Fourflush has a certain ability, he is able to assume a virtue if he has it not, and if he had a foundation of character, would, in spite of his other disqualifications, answer the purpose. He sees people once or twice, rarely as many as three times, and he leaves many of his people with the impression that he has merit, for the simple reason that the acquaintance had not endured long enough to expose the four-flush. This humbug has his counterpart in medicine, law and in the ministry, and ordinary business callings. As a salesman he is full of theories of salesmanship, but they never bear fruit. The house that employs him at a salary of \$900 to \$1,200 instead of the \$5,000 he talks so glibly about, will find that although he makes two or three good plays, his year's work has little profit for the

house, and that he would be less and less useful over the same territory, for the better he is known the worse for his employer. His ability is all on the surface and consists principally of what he learns from others, for he will generally be found to have the ability to adapt a portion of the ideas of others to complete his own front; there is nothing back of the front but arrant egotism and insufferable vanity, and these are likely to be mingled with even worse qualities. He soon receives and deserves the contempt of his acquaintances, and his four-flush is surely called in time. Only those who do not know him well labor under the mistaken impression that he is an expert salesman.

"His manner of work is by partial truths, detached from their actual associations and made to do duty in misrepresentation by which he hopes to close the sale. If he is called to account, there is the fragment of truth for him to hold up, and he has some skill in side-stepping, and trusts to this to avoid being cornered. His object is to get a signed order, not to make a legitimate sale on business principles. He is everlastingly butting in to the sales manager with schemes which he figures out beautifully on paper. He is a great chap to talk about hustling and action, and he is frantic to have a lot of expense incurred for printing and other things, but the schemes never work out, and the sales manager has had his experience.

"Strange as it may seem, this humbug is rarely discharged. His nature leads him to try something else, and he often contrives to get a good letter from his manager, for the reason that the latter is so pleased with the outcome that he will do almost anything. It is the same way at the next place, and so on until the end of the chapter. While he is drawing money from one employer he is willfully spending his time negotiating with the next."

Protecting Home Trade.

There are various reasons why people go away from the home town to trade. Let us look at some of them:

They wish a change.

They think they can buy more cheaply.

They think they will find a greater assortment of goods.

There are ways to combat each and all of these ideas. The first way is to make them wrong ideas. Sell at reasonable prices. Keep up a good assortment of stock. Keep your places in such shape that your customers will not want a change.

The disease afflicting the stores in many small towns seems to be "dry rot." There is no reason why a store in a town of five thousand inhabitants should not be as attractive, neat and up-to-date as a store of the same size in the city of five hundred thousand. Small stores are plentiful in large cities. This proves conclusively that they can make money there—else they would not exist.

It is easily seen that the expenses of a small store are larger in the big city than in a small town. Rent is high, cost of delivery is great, living expenses and incidentals are much increased. It follows, then, that the same amount of gross profit will leave a much greater margin of net income to the merchant in the town than to the man in the big city. This is cited merely to show that the man in the small town can just as well afford to modernize his establishment as can the city man. Because he has not done so is one reason why his trade goes to the larger place. It may not be true that the city store is a better place to trade, but it looks so and the customer, therefore, thinks it is so.

A full and complete explanation of the reason why your town trade goes to the city can be seen clearly when you go to the city yourself and look at your city competitor's store. Can you meet his prices? Do so. Do your customers know you can meet his prices? Let them know it. Tell them about it. Do as he does. Use the same means that he uses—Advertise. Two to one none of you give proper weight to the value of local advertising, or proper support to your local paper or papers. Do your customers read the local paper? Let them see your "ad" there and in the ad, tell them something.

Does your city competitor attract trade with an occasional offering of novelties at low prices? Do you the same. That's one of the things your customer goes to your competitor after.

It's your own fault. Give your customers what they want and find out what they want before they find it out themselves. That way lies success. You should wake up. You evidently are in the habit of standing behind your showcase and handing out to your trade just what they call for. That's all right, so far as it goes, but the same sort of service is rendered by a slot machine.

What you want to do is to change their minds for them. They like it. It's what they go to the city for. Your association is all right. It has a broad field of usefulness. But it cannot work out the salvation of your individual members. The man who cannot wake up will pass gently from sleep to oblivion and you will have to let him pass.

In conclusion: Buy often, but not too much at a time. Buy your own goods. Go to the trading centers at least three times a year to do it. When you do this you get goods at reasonable prices and you get ideas for nothing. Last of all—stay awake.

Close Buying and Close Selling.

A hardware manufacturer, writing in a recent issue of *The Iron Age*, makes some rather caustic and pithy comments on the average hardware dealer's style of buying goods. In part he has this to say: "I know, from 15 years' experience selling the retail hardware dealers, that not one in twenty is a good all-round buyer. The majority are mighty poor advertisers; do not keep their stores attractive or up-to-date; many with dirty windows and mixed up stock; do not know the merits of their wares, and if a catalog house customer comes into their store, throw rocks at him, until he gets his neighbors to club with him and send away for goods."

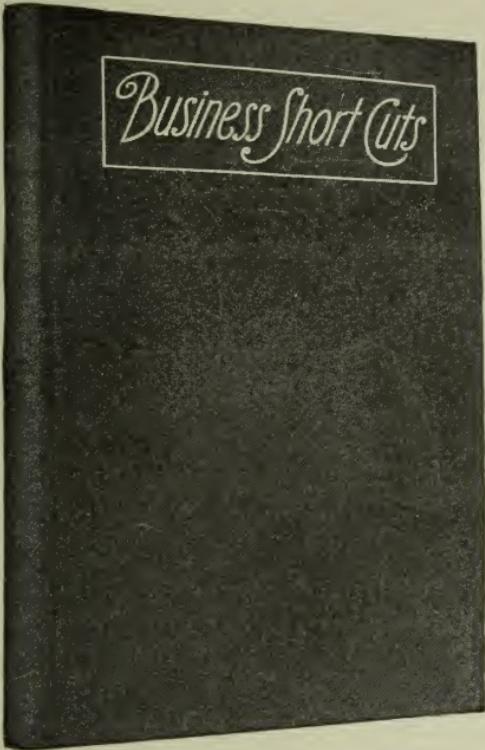
The present writer confesses to a certain lack of sympathy for the retailer who complains about catalog house competition. The retailer who says he cannot meet the prices of the catalog house shows that he is a poor buyer,

and what is more, a worse seller. The average retailer gets in the habit of dealing with one house, because that house will carry him on long credits, with the natural consequence that the jobber charges a proportionate increase of profits to insure the extraordinary risk in the credit line; and the retailer, in order to make even a living, has to charge an additional profit over this cost, and therefore he is placed entirely out of the possibility of competing with the catalog house, which in the majority of cases buys for cash, or at least discounts its bills—buys close, sells quickly, for cash, and obtains a turn-over many times quicker than the retailer. It seems to the writer, therefore, that one of the great difficulties with the retailer in meeting catalog competition, lies in the fact that he is endeavoring to make trade follow him, instead of following the trade.

Keep Stock Moving.

We believe as a matter of convenience that our merchant has placed on his desk every day a statement of the day's sales. He is very much pleased to note that the amount of sales increase each day. At the end of six months or a year, if he be the ordinary manager, when his inventory period comes he is absolutely dumbfounded to find that he has some stock on hand this year that he had last year, and he cannot account for it. The whole trouble has been that he did not keep his stock moving. Last year some slick salesman got him to take a manicure set that cost him \$6 or \$7. It was displayed through the Christmas season, but nobody seems to care for it. The department had priced it down to cost, and still nobody took it, and with a sigh he put it away under the counter or in the stock room to bring it out again this Christmas. The inventory shows that the beautiful giddy

petticoat creation that cost \$11 nobody wanted at \$5, because they belong to the vintage of 36 months ago. The first requisite for free cure for this state of affairs is to have perpetual inventory that will give the size of the stock each month. Keep the stock in sight, for when you have it before your eyes constantly you will not be tempted to forget it and don't be induced to buy luxuries that you know your people have not money to purchase.



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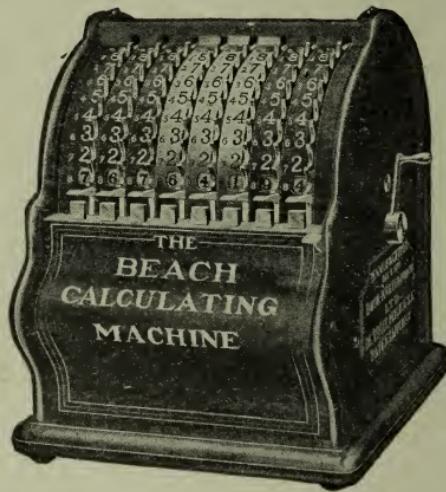
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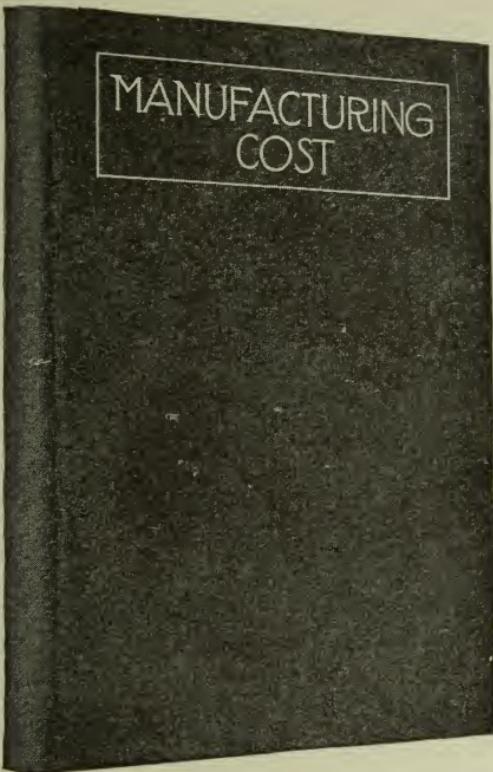
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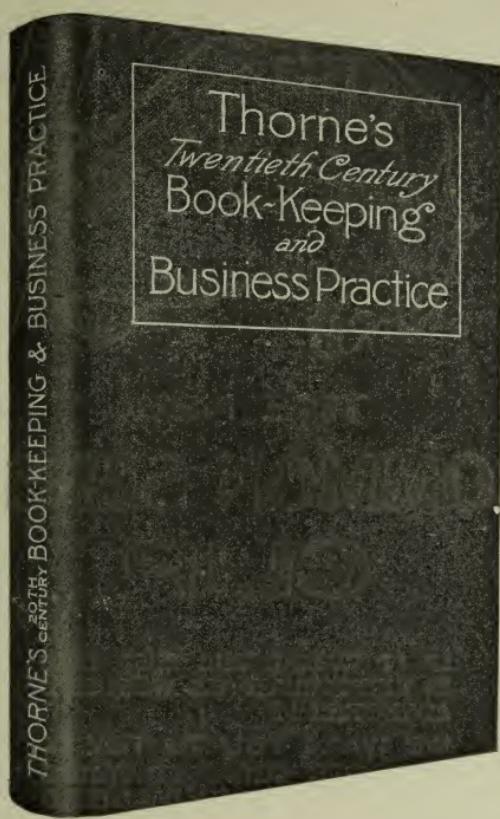
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